



We are grateful to Howie Hawkins and Angela Walker for carrying the Green Party in 2020 as our nominees for President and Vice-President

Discussion and Debates are Better Than Edicts

by Joe Allen, Midwest Socialist

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I read Sean Duffy's "Why DSA is Not Endorsing Joe Biden" in the Midwest Socialist with great interest. Election year debates for socialists are always important for sharpening our arguments and clarifying our political positions. It is here that I found Sean's article not to be very useful.

Let me start by saying that I was a delegate to the 2019 DSA convention and voted for both resolutions

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discussed in Sean's article: Resolution 15: "In the Event of Sanders Loss," and Resolution 31: "Class Struggle Elections." But since the convention I've grown uneasy with how Resolution 31 is understood and is being used.

Sean makes an admirable case against endorsing Joe Biden. But they make a sharp pivot towards the end of their article to attack Green Party presidential

candidate Howie Hawkins. Sean seems concerned that Howie's politics and platform would appeal to DSA members, and rightly so. "Hawkins is a socialist," Sean wrote, "and is running on a platform in line with DSA's politics." But they quickly declare, "His campaign is also completely unserious with no chance of victory."

Using Sean's criteria, since Eugene Debs had 'no chance of victory' in his many campaigns for president, he shouldn't have been supported either, or even Norman Thomas when he ran in 1932. Howie has been thrown off the ballot in [Pennsylvania](#), and denied access to the ballot in [Wisconsin](#). These are straight forward attacks on the left and democratic rights. Howie may not have a chance of winning but his presence is considered dangerous enough for the Democratic Party establishment.

Sean goes on to [argue](#):

Hawkins' campaign would be an opportunity for DSA to agitate against the Democratic Party and preach the message of socialism. But this view totally overlooks that the majority of the working class 1) desperately want Trump gone, and 2) see voting for Biden as the way that happens. It's likely that DSA's support of a marginal presidential candidate would mostly serve to alienate people who might otherwise be supportive of our politics.

Unfortunately, this comes off as an endorsement of Biden, all but in name. I also find troubling Sean's appeal to "the majority of the working class" and to fear of "alienating people" as dismissing Howie's campaign. Personally, I have no idea what the 'majority of the working class' thinks about anything. This includes whether they think of themselves as "working class" to begin with. We do know that given a choice between a neoliberal and rightwing populist, the latter has a good chance of winning, as we learned in 2016. I'm also skeptical of worrying about the concerns of middle class liberals, the most loyal of Democratic Party supporters, who would be the most violently hostile towards Howie's campaign.

Neither resolutions 15 nor 31 were meant to exclude or set the bar so high as not to endorse someone like Howie Hawkins. If Howie's campaign broadly corresponds to our "Class Struggle Elections" resolution, shouldn't there be, at the very least, a robust discussion and debate about it? If there are concerns and disagreements about our posture towards the 2020 presidential election in general, shouldn't we have that discussion, too?

Concerns, debates, and disagreements should not be pushed to the sidelines or be allowed to fester; they should be dealt with straightforwardly. I planned on voting for Howie in November but hadn't recently thought about the question of Chicago DSA endorsing him. Sean ends his article by declaring, "DSA is not endorsing Joe Biden." But, that's not the issue. The issue is Howie Hawkins, which is being debated in other [chapters](#). This comes off as more of an edict rather than a willingness to have a discussion.

If we need a debate, let's have one.